

ABRAHAM AND THE LAND OF HIS NATIVITY.

BY HORMUZD RASSAM.

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There have been from time to time conflicting opinions and theories, both ancient and modern, regarding the historical site of "Ur of the Chaldees," the supposed birth-place of Abraham, especially since the discovery of some cuneiform inscriptions in the ruins of Moggayir, at the extreme end of Southern Mesopotamia, wherein, it is alleged, the name of *Ur* occurs, and which a number of Assyrian scholars construed into that celebrated ancient site, mentioned in the eleventh chapter of Genesis, that I have taken upon myself the task of contesting its existence anywhere in that region. The world knows nothing of Abraham except what can be gathered of his history from the Bible, and it is therefore necessary to go to that Book for any authentic information about him and his fatherland.

In quoting different passages from Holy Writ in support of my argument, I beg to point out, in the first place, that I do not do so on religious ground, as my purpose is simply to show the historical aspect of the question in dispute, and not to prove my contention from a theological standpoint. Secondly, as I am not an Assyrian scholar, and incompetent, therefore, to decide how certain signs and figures in the arrow-headed writing ought to be read and pronounced, I must not touch upon their interpretation, as I might fall into a woeful dilemma, and incur the odium of being too inquisitive. But I want to touch briefly upon the danger of trusting to theories regarding the meaning of Semitic words in use even at the present day among the Arabs, Chaldeans, and Syrians.

There are perhaps more than five hundred millions of Christians, Moslems, and Jews, who only know of the existence of Abraham from the Bible, and we ought therefore to be guided by what is recorded therein of him and the land of his nativity, and let that history speak for itself.

Grace Amadon, Abraham
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In Genesis (xi, 31), where we first learn of Abraham's country, it is said: "And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there." In the first verse of the following chapter it is related: "Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee." We must assume, therefore, that Haran was the country of Abraham, the same as any Englishman, being destined to change his abode to France from London and moves in the first place to Dover, could safely assert that the latter place was part and parcel of his country. In the fifth verse it is recorded that: "Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came." Then in the ninth verse of the same chapter it is said: "And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south." Now no one can doubt that Haran is situated in Northern Mesopotamia, about 450 miles above Babylon, and not less than 600 from Moggayir. How is it then when Abraham was commanded to go to Canaan, which is about 550 miles to the west, that Terah, with all his great retinue, should go nearly 400 miles out of his way for Abraham to reach the promised land, which was to the south-west? It has been urged by different writers upon the subject of Abraham's emigration that the route was chosen for convenience; but those who advocate this theory are not aware that to take that course from the situation of Moggayir is anything but the right one, if they had examined the country properly between the latter place and the Holy Land. Abraham could have easily marched straight to Palestine from Moggayir through a country which has neither hills nor rivers to impede his passage, the same as the nomad Arabs move from place to place at the present day with all their substance. I have no doubt that the four confederate kings who invaded Sodom and carried Lot captive, whom Abraham afterwards rescued, had followed the same track from Southern Mesopotamia. Those who dispute the position of Padan-aram as being the native country of Abraham, ought, I think, to show in the first instance a good reason for the object of Terah going such a distance out of his way to

sojourn at Haran, if it had not been a city with which he had a previous acquaintance from its proximity to Ur of the Chaldees. Moreover, I do not know why Terah should choose Haran as his future home from such a distance as Moggayir, where he would be looked upon as a stranger. But as I believe that Terah went from a place which must have been somewhere at or near the present city of Orfa, in Northern Mesopotamia, known to the Hebrews as Aram-Naharaim, it was not extraordinary that Abraham should call Haran his country when he sent his servant Eliezer thither to fetch a wife for his son Isaac. All references made in the Bible about Abraham point to his country as being in Aram-Naharaim, and this name must not be confounded with the Greek appellation of *Mesopotamia*, as the former applies only, according to the Hebrew geographical positions, to that part of Northern Mesopotamia which embraces the province of Orfa, the ancient Eddesa; whereas the latter is a Greek word which takes in the whole valley of the Euphrates and Tigris from Diarbekir to the junction of the two rivers, two hundred miles below Babylon. The mistake began by the authors of the Septuagint, as the first mention of Aram-Naharaim was in the 24th chapter of Genesis, when, as I said before, Abraham sent Eliezer thither on an errand to his relatives at Haran, and said to him: "But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac." Aram-Naharaim was also the country of Balaam;* and we find that it had a king in those days named Chushanrishathaim, mentioned in Judges.† Surely no one can ever imagine that this Aram-Naharaim was in Southern Babylonia, near the Persian Gulf? We find also that Joshua in speaking to the tribes of Israel,‡ he told them that their forefathers "dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor." This allusion also points to that part of the Euphrates in the northern part of Mesopotamia, which is verified by what Moses said in Deuteronomy of Jacob's nationality as an Aramee.§ This in my opinion proves more than anything else that Abraham's family came from the neighbourhood of Haran, at the upper part of the Euphrates, and not the lower; and it is remarkable that both Balaam|| and Hosea¶ mention that part of Mesopotamia merely as

* Numbers xxiii, 7; see also Deut. xxiii, 4.

† Judges iii, 8. ‡ Joshua xxiv, 2. § Chapter xxvi, 5.

|| Numbers xxiii, 7. ¶ Hosea xii, 12.

אֲרָם Aram, though in the authorized English version of the Old Testament the former is rendered *Aram*, and the latter *Syria*; but in the revised version both are called *Aram*. Why the Greeks corrupted the Semitic word Aram into Syria, and Aramaic into Syriac is a mystery.

There were formerly no less than five Arams existing on the east and west of the Euphrates, namely, Aram of Damascus (kingdom of the so-called Syria); Aram-Naharaim (Northern Mesopotamia, between the Euphrates and the Khaboor, or Chebar river); Aram-padan (which means arable land, where Terah and his family lived); Aram-Zobah (Province of Aleppo); and Aram-Rehob, the district of Hamath, bordering on the Mediterranean as far as Latakia. It may be that as the Greeks corrupted the word *Assyrian* into Syrian, thus confounding different nationalities with this misnomer, which has no connexion whatever with the original, either in sound or etymology. It is a pity the revisers of the Old Testament did not correct all the words into Aram which were erroneously translated formerly into Syria, as they did in some cases already alluded to above.

Orfa, where the dreadful massacres took place among the Armenians some time ago, is believed by all learned Jews, Mohammedans, and Christians of that country to have been the "Ur of the Chaldees" mentioned in Scripture. Being so near Haran, and commanding an important position in that part of Mesopotamia, it was most probably, in olden times, as it is now, the capital of Padan-Aram. It might have been called then Oor, as it is in the original Hebrew and Aramaic. It is very striking that in the ancient Padan-Aram we have at the present day three positions near each other in Aram-Naharaim that are called by three biblical names, which are Orfa, Haran, and Serug, styled in Arabic Serooj, the hard *g* having changed into *j*, as there is no letter as the former in Arabic. The difficulty has arisen from the supposed non-existence of such a country as Chaldea in Northern Mesopotamia; as it had been taken for granted that such a realm was only in a small part in Southern Mesopotamia, between Babylon and the Persian Gulf! But if we refer to Grecian history we shall find that the Chaldeans were mentioned inhabiting different parts of the range of mountains between the Mediterranean and Persia. Moreover, *Ur of the Chaldees* does not necessarily mean Ur in Chaldea, but it may signify the Ur of the Chaldeans, like we may now style

Algeria as of France, though it is in Africa and not in Europe, or Aden of the English though it is in Arabia and not in England. The words "Ur of the Chaldees" show, however, that there were other Urs existing at the time in Biblical lands, like Bethlehem of Judah, and Bethlehem of Zebulon; and Cush* (Ethiopia) of Asia Minor, and Cush† of Africa. It is very interesting to note that in the Chaldee or Aramaic language Jerusalem is called **ܐܪܡ ܫܠܡ**.

Oor-Shalem, that is to say, Oor of Selim, like **ܐܪܡ ܫܠܡ**, Oor, d'Chaldaye, or Oor of the Chaldees. We find also that that northern part of Mesopotamia called by the Hebrews Aram-Naharaim, is styled by the Prophet Ezekiel as the land of the Chaldeans,‡ as the river Chebar (in Arabic Khaboor) is one of the rivers which surround Padan-Aram mentioned above. St. Stephen also mentions, in Acts vii, 4, that Abraham came out of the "land of the Chaldeans" when he was in *Aram-Naharaim*. There could have been no better word applied to that country as the *Arable Aram*, from the richness of its soil and extent of its cereal production. Its annual export of corn to Europe, even now, when a small part of the land is cultivated, is very great. As for the position of the town of Orfa, it is one of the most picturesque in Mesopotamia; and had it a better and more energetic Government, its province might have vied in beauty and importance with the most flourishing regions in the world. The town is situated on an eminence, with a large number of rivulets running in all directions, and commanding extensive fertile plains stretching far and wide. Its produce of fruit and cereals might prove a source of incalculable riches, especially if railway communication could be established between the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf, through the Euphrates and Tigris Valley. A large extent of land in front of the town is studded with private and public gardens; and within the city itself there are a large number of well to do families, who have their houses surrounded with arbours and orchards.

I think it will not be uninteresting to quote some passages from different writers, both ancient and modern, regarding the Ur of the Chaldees mentioned in Scripture, and leave it to painstaking critics to draw their conclusion therefrom. I must begin first with the ancient historians, who are supposed to claim a better authority

* Genesis ii, 13.

† 2 Kings xix, 9.

‡ Ezekiel i, 3.

than modern scholars and travellers, they having lived nearer the time of Biblical sages.

Eupolemus says, that in the "tenth generation [after the Flood], in the city of Babylonia, called Camarina (which, by some, is called the city Urie, and which signifies a city of the Chaldeans), there lived, the thirteenth in descent (a man named), Abraham, a man of a noble race and superior to all others in wisdom. Of him they relate that he was the inventor of astrology and the Chaldean magic, and that on account of his eminent piety he was esteemed by God. It is further said that, under the directions of God, he removed and lived in Phœnicia, and there taught the Phœnicians the motions of the sun and moon, and all other things; for which reason he was held in great reverence by their king."*

Nicolas of Damascus says thus of Abraham: "Abram was king of Damascus, and came thither as a stranger, with an army, from that part of the country which is situated above Babylon of the Chaldeans. But after a short time he again emigrated from this region with his people, and transferred his dwelling to the land which was at that time called Canaana, but is now called Judea; together with all the multitude which had increased with him, of whose history I shall give an account in another book. The name of Abram is well known even to this day in Damascus, and a village is pointed out which is still called the House of Abraham."†

This writer makes the emigration of Abraham to have been from *above* Babylon, and not from *below* it, where Moggayir is situated; but Justin, on the authority of Trogus Pompeius, makes a more startling statement in regard to the Jews' origin by fixing it at Damascus in Syria, and he goes so far as to allege that even the Assyrian kings and Semiramis had sprung from that Syrian region!‡

Jacob Bryant in his "Ancient Mythology" advocates Southern Babylonia as the land of Abraham's nativity; and as he gives an interesting account of the different historical theories regarding the whereabouts of the Ur of the Chaldees, I cannot do better than quote what he adduces for and against his contention. He says: "Before I proceed, it may not be improper to obviate an objection, which may be made to the place, and region, where I have supposed Abraham to have been first conversant; as there are writers who

* Abimelech, king of Gerar. CORY'S *Ancient Fragments*, p. 77.† CORY'S *Ancient Fragments*, p. 78.‡ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

have imagined Ur of Chaldea to have been in another part of the world. The region in question is by Strabo plainly defined as a province of Babylonia: and Arrian, Ptolemy, Dionysius, Pliny, and Marcellinus all determine its situation so clearly, thought no doubt could have arisen. It appears, however, that Bochart, Grotius, Le Clerc, Cellarius, with some others, are dissatisfied with the common opinion, and cannot be persuaded that Abraham came from this country. Bochart accordingly tells us that the Ur of the Scriptures was near Nisibis, in the upper regions of Assyria, and bordered upon Armenia. This is surely too lightly determined. All that we learn from Marcellinus is, that they passed by a castle called Ur. Not a word is there mentioned about a region called Chaldea, nor of a people styled Chaldeans, which was necessary to be found. Yet the learned writer says, *res patet, we may be assured* that here was the birth of the Patriarch: and the original place of his residence was near Nisibis. In another part of his work he mentions a place called Ur, near Syria, upon the Euphrates, of which notice is taken by Pliny, and he seems to think it not improbable that here might have been the first abode of Abraham. From hence we may perceive that he was not very determinate in his opinion. Edessa is said to have been called Ur and Urhoë, on which account some have been induced to place the birth and residence of the Patriarch here. But who ever heard of Chaldeans in these parts, or of a region named Chaldea?

"If there be anything certain in geography, we may be assured, from a number of the best writers, that the country of which we are treating was in a different part of the world. Chaldea lay to the south of Babylonia, and was originally bounded to the east and west by the Tigris and Euphrates, so that it was an interamnian region. Hence Joshua tells the children of Israel, in speaking of the first residence of their ancestors, that their *fathers dwell on the other side of the flood*, or river, *in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham*. And St. Stephen, speaking of the call of this Patriarch, says: *The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charraan*. The land of Chaldea was in those times a portion of the great region called Mesopotamia, and, as I before said, it was bounded to the west by the Euphrates, which in its latter course ran nearly parallel with the Tigris, and emptied itself into the sea below. In this province was the Ur of the Scriptures, called Ur of the Chaldeans,

which was so styled in order to distinguish it from every other place of the same name. It was also expressed Our, Ourhoë, Ourchoë, and the people were called Ourchani. It was sometimes compounded Camour, and rendered Camurine, and it is thus mentioned by Eupolemus. The description of Chaldea given by Strabo is very precise. He speaks much in favour of the natives, and says that they inhabited a portion of Babylonia which bordered upon Arabia and the Persic Sea. He describes them as being devoted to philosophy, especially the Borsippeni and the Orcheni. These last we may suppose to have been particularly the inhabitants of the city concerning which we are treating. For here, in the true land of Chaldea, we must look for Ur of the Chaldees. We accordingly find that there was such a place called Urchoë by Ptolemy, by Josephus, Ura, or Ure. By Eusebius it is rendered Ur, and it was undoubtedly the capital city of the province. Add to this the account given by Eupolemus, who points out plainly the place of the Patriarch's birth and abode.*

"As the history is so plain, why do we go so wide of the mark as to suppose this city to have been upon the confines of Syria? or, what is more extraordinary, to make it, as some do, an Assyrian city, and to place it high in the north, at the foot of Mount Taurus, upon the borders of Media and Armenia, where the name of Chaldeans is not to be found? Yet to these parts does Grotius, as well as Bochart, refer it, and mentioning Ur of the Chaldees, he adds, *the name remained to the time of Marcellinus*. But this learned man is surely wrong in determining so hastily and with such a latitude, for there was no Ur of the Chaldees, nor any Chaldea in these parts. Lucian was born at Samosata, and Marcellinus was thoroughly acquainted with this country, yet neither from them nor from Pliny, Ptolemy, Mela, Solinus, nor from any writer, is there the least hint of any Chaldeans being here. The place mentioned above was an obscure castle of little consequence, as we may infer, from its never having been taken notice of by any other writer. Grotius says *mansit loco nomen*, from whence one might be led to imagine that it had existed in the days of Abraham. But there is not the least reason to suppose any such thing.

"There is another question to be asked. As the rout (*sic*) supposed to be taken from Babylonia and the south towards Haran is objected to, I should be glad to know which way the Patriarch

* See page 6.

should have directed his steps. It is answered, *that he ought to have gone to Canaan directly westward, through Arabia, which would have been nearly in a strait (sic) line if he had gone from the lower regions of Babylonia, but as he proceeded in a circuit, that could not be the place of his departure.* Now, from the best accounts, we may be assured that the rout (*sic*), which we suppose him to have taken was the true and only way—there was no other by which people could proceed. The very best accounts prove that this was the rout (*sic*) ever taken by people who went from Babylonia and its provinces to Palestina and Egypt, for the direct way, as Grotius terms it, and which Bochart recommends, could not be pursued. From Babylonia and Chaldea westward was a desert of great extent, which reached to Canaan, and still further to the Nile. Nor is there, I believe, upon record above one instance of its having ever been traversed.* All armies and all caravans of merchants were obliged to go to the north of the Euphrates when they came from Babylonia to Egypt, or the reverse when they went from Egypt to Babylonia. Herodotus, when he is speaking of the march of Cambyzes to Egypt, says that the only way into that country was downward from the Euphrates, by Syro-Phenicia and Palestine.† *There is no other apparent passage into Egypt but this.* And the reason is plain, for the Arabian desert rendered it impracticable to proceed in a strait (*sic*) line. People were obliged to go round by Carchemish upon the Euphrates, and the kings of Babylonia and Egypt fortified that place alternately to secure the passage of the river. When Pharaoh Necho and the king of Babylon wanted to meet in battle, they were obliged to come this way to the encounter. The army of Cambyzes, and all the armies of the Greeks and Romans, those who served under Cyrus the younger, the army of Alexander, Antiochus, Antonius, Trajan, Gordian, Julian, went to the north by the Euphrates. Some of these princes set out from Egypt, yet were obliged to take this circuit. It is remarkable that Crassus, in his rout (*sic*) towards Babylonia, went by Charrae, or Harran, which was the very spot where Abraham, in his way from Chaldea to Canaan, resided. At this place the Roman general was met by Surena and slain. Alexander the great went nearly in the same track; for though this was round about,

* It is said by Berosus that Nebuchadnezzar, hearing of his father's death, made his way in great haste over this desert.

† Herodotus, L. iii, c. 5.

yet it was by many esteemed the best road to Babylonia. The Emperor Julian also took his rout (*sic*) by Haran, but from thence went the lower way by Cercusium and the Euphrates. For there were two roads through Mesopotamia to Babylon and Persia, and they both commenced at Charrae, or Haran. All these circumstances afford great light to the Mosaic history, and abundantly witness its truth and precision, even in the most minute particulars. It is therefore a great pity that men of learning are not sufficiently considerate in their determinations. We, from this instance, see that they would set aside a plain and accepted interpretation, on account of a seeming difficulty, to the prejudice of Scripture, which interpretation, upon inquiry, affords a wonderful evidence in its favour, for it appears, upon the strictest examination, that things must have happened as they are represented.*

It is not difficult to infer that Bryant was fully convinced that the homestead of the family of Terah was in Southern Babylonia, and he tries to prove his argument by quotations from different historians, as if their information were infallible, quite forgetting the main point of Abraham's connexion with Aram-Naharaim in Northern Mesopotamia, which he never alludes to. Most of his arguments are flimsy, especially, as he asserts that there were no Chaldeans beyond Southern Mesopotamia, though he has a note in vol. iii, p. 287, on the word "Casdim" or "Chaldæi," in which he admits that "there was a Chaldea upon the Pontus Euxinus to the east of Sinope, in the country of the Chalybes;" but he adds, "*nobody will suppose that Abraham came from hence.*" Had the writer examined a proper map of Asia Minor, the ancient Cappadocia, he would have found that Aram-Naharaim bordered on that country, and its south eastern limit is within a few miles of the district of Serooj, (the ancient Serug, named after the great grandfather of Abraham), or Padan-Aram. Then with regard to his references to the routes followed in times past by armies and travellers, he makes a woeful mistake by saying that there was no other way from Mesopotamia to Syria and the Holy Land except by Haran, and he goes so far as to ask, "which way the Patriarch should have directed his steps?" He could not have known that there were, and are, two ways to go from Irack or Babylonia to Palestine: one by Aana, and the other by Dair, both being important towns on the western side of the

* JACOB BRYANT, *Ancient Mythology*, Vol. III, p. 277.

Euphrates; and in the time of Palmyra's prosperous days there was a flourishing trade between the East and the West through the kingdom of Zenobia to Syria. If I were asked by anyone which way to choose to go to Damascus from Mesopotamia, I should say it all depended upon where I was, as that interammanian region is more than one thousand miles in length. In going from Mossul or any part of Northern Mesopotamia I should proceed either by Orfa or Dair; but if I were at Baghdad, or in any locality in Southern Babylonia, the route taken would be on the western side of the Euphrates, and enter Syria either *viâ* Aana or Dair; but I should certainly never think of going three hundred miles out of my way to reach Damascus or Aleppo by way of Haran. The very fact of his quoting Herodotus (L. iii, c. 5) about the passage of Cambyses through the Syrian desert, shows that there was a way through that country which Phanes, the Halicarnassian recommended. Moreover, modern travellers have frequented that route *viâ* Palmyra, though since the destruction of that kingdom the country has been deserted.

In 1837 the well known General Francis Rawdon Chesney, the commandant of the "Euphrates Expedition," took the direct desert route from the Persian Gulf to Damascus, without even following the valley of the Euphrates; and now I hear that Colonel Edward Mockler, lately Political Resident at Baghdad, has taken the Palmyra route *viâ* Damascus and Beyroot on his way home.

With reference to the allusion Bryant makes about Joshua's words to the children of Israel regarding the origin of their forefathers having dwelt "on the other side of the flood in old time," for the purpose of proving that he had meant the lowest part of the Euphrates, is contrary to reason, because all allusions made in the Old Testament to a "flood," or "great river," are directed to that part which borders on Aram-Naharaim and Padan-Aram, and with the history of Eliezer's mission to Northern Mesopotamia, and Jacob's matrimonial visit to Haran.

I think I cannot do better than quote the short notices made by three distinguished and experienced travellers and savans, who visited in person the lands I have been referring to,—I mean General F. R. Chesney, Mr. William Ainsworth the famous geologist, and Mr. J. S. Buckingham, as will be seen from their writings, that they considered Orfa (Eddesa) to have been the identical position of the "Ur of the Chaldees." General Chesney says thus: "To this place I had looked forward with much interest. Its history as

a royal city, its much earlier connection with Job and Abraham, and its present as well as future importance with regard to trade (of which its position has at all times made it an emporium), naturally gave it great consequence in my eyes. Its appearance, as the traveller approaches, is most picturesque. It occupies the intervening valley, as well as the slopes of two hills, which jut out from the range of neighbouring mountains. On their southern side is the castle, which, as well as the town itself, is defended by high walls flanked by square towers. The city contains 900 Turkish, 800 Armenian, and 200 Syrian houses, all well built: also numerous baths, and about twenty mosques, one of which is a remarkably handsome building, with two large ponds attached to it full of sacred fish.

"The extensive excavations in the vicinity of the town are supposed to be the remains of ancient Riha or Edessa, and on the adjoining hill are the scattered ruins of a building attributed to Nimrûd."*

Under the head of *Ur of the Chaldees*, Mr. Ainsworth writes: "The city of Ur, which was in Ur of the Chaldees, and the seat of the nativity of Abraham and of the death of Haran, is, to the present day, denominated by the Syrians Urhoi, by the Arabs corrupted into 'Urfâh, or 'Orfâh. It is at the foot of the mountains of Osroene, and at the head of the same great and fertile plain, which contains the seats of the patriarchs of the family of Shem; Haran, and Seruj. Tradition has consecrated 'Urfâh as the birth-place of the father of Isaac, and the Bîrket el Ibrahim el Khalîl is still supposed to contain the descendants of the fish loved by the Prophet. 'Urfâh is also celebrated as the residence of Akbâr, commonly called Agbarus, by Herodotus *Αγβαρος*, who is said to have written a letter to our Saviour.

"Ur was not only 'Ur of the Chaldees' (Gen. xi, 28, Aben Ezra in Gen., Bochart, lib. i, Phaleg, x, and Hugo Grotius in Gen.), but is more particularly described as in the land of the Chaldeans (Josephus, lib. i; *Antiq.*, vii), and by Eusebius as 'Ur oppidum regni Chaldæorum,' that is, of the kingdom founded by Chedod; the same author also says, 'In urbe Camarina, seu Urie, quæ Græcis dicta Chaldæopolis.' Oriental historians conduct the patriarch Abraham, in his migration to the land of Canaan, from Haran to

* CHESNEY'S *Narrative of the Euphrates Expedition*, p. 139.

Berza, or Beroe, the modern Aleppo; and 'Ahmed Ibn Yusuf, and Abu Mohamméd Mustáfah, identify Ur with Roha, the modern Urfah. From the records of the Holy Writ we gather (Gen. xi, 31) that Terah and Abraham, with others of the family, went out of Ur to go into the land of Canaan, and they came into Haran, and dwelt there. It is evident, that, had the Ur of the Chaldees been identical with the Ur of Babylonian Chaldæa, the Orchoe of Ptolemy and Pliny, that the way of the patriarchs did not lie through Haran in Mesopotamia; but even the direction of the journey is preserved in the amplitude of the sacred text, for we are expressly informed (Gen. xii, 9), that the Patriarch 'journeyed, going on still towards the south.'

"Ur, in the progress of corruption, became Urhoi, Roha, 'Orfah or 'Urfáh, and, with change of masters, Chaldæopolis, Antiochea, Callirhoe, and Edessa. Mr. Buckingham has apparently mistaken what Benjamin of Tudela says of Dakia, or Rakkah, as belonging to 'Urfáh, and hence he makes Haran two days' journey from that city; from which it is in reality visible at almost all times, and a ride of only eight hours, or about twenty miles in direct distance."*

The geographer Buckingham, alludes to Orfa, or Ur of the Chaldees, as follows:—

"Orfah is conceived, by all the learned Jews and Mohammedans, as well as by the most eminent scholars among the Christians, to have been Ur of the Chaldees, from whence Abraham went forth to dwell in Haran, previous to his being called from thence, by God, to go into Canaan, the land promised to himself and to his seed for ever. The Jews say that this place is called in Scripture Ourcadin, that is, the Fire of Chaldea, out of which, say they, God brought Abraham; and on this account the Talmudists affirm that Abraham was here cast into the fire and was miraculously delivered.

"This capital of the country between the Euphrates and the Tigris, the Padan-Aram and Aram-Naharaim of the Hebrews, the Mesopotamia of the Greeks, and the Paradise of the poets, received from its Macedonian conquerors the name of Edessa; and an abundant fountain which the city enclosed, and called, in Greek, Callirhoe, communicated this name to the city itself. In later times it was called Roha, or, with the article of the Arabs, Or-rhoa, and by abbreviation, Orha.

* AINSWORTH'S *Assyria, Babylon, and Chaldea*, p. 152.

"D'Anville thinks that this last name may be derived from the Greek term signifying a fountain; or, according to another opinion, it may refer to the founder of this city, whose name is said to have been Orrhoi, now retained, with some little corruption, in Orfah or Urfah."*

There is no doubt that both Job and Balaam were natives of Aram-Naharaim, and were of the same stock as the Hebrews in the Aramean sense of the word; and so also a large majority of the Arabs. In the Book of Job it is related that bands of Chaldeans and Sabeans had plundered that Patriarch's camels and cattle; it is therefore not unreasonable to suppose that both those nationalities inhabited the northern part of Mesopotamia, as we know that Haran was at one time a Sabean settlement, and the Chaldeans occupied one part of Cappadocia to the north. Diodorus Siculus mentions (Tom. i; T. ii, p. 142-145) the temple of the moon at Haran, whereto the Sabeans went for pilgrimages; but now that sect, which is commonly called Christians of St. John, are only found in Southern Babylonia and in Khuzistan in Southern Persia. It is very remarkable that those interesting people, of whom there are now no more than, at the most, about one hundred thousand souls existing, speak almost the same language as that of the Chaldeans in Assyria and Mesopotamia, called by them "Chaldee" or Chaldean, erroneously styled in Europe as *Syriac*; but as I intend to touch briefly hereafter upon the nationality and language of the latter, I will confine myself, for the present, to the subject under consideration.

The origin of the Chaldeans and their ruling power have been from time immemorial a puzzle, and I suppose the controversy will continue as it has been to the end of the chapter, especially as up to the present time scholars have not agreed as to the etymology of the word אַרְפַּכְשָׁד, Arphaxad, from which all the Semitic nations believe this nationality of the Chaldeans and Hebrews sprang.† Why the authors of the Septuagint translated the word כַּשְׁדִּיָּא, Chasdia, into Chaldean is not easily to be understood, unless, indeed, they adopted the word from the Chaldeans themselves, as we know from Josephus, alluded to above, that they were called by that name in his time. We learn, however, from the history of Diæarchus, a disciple of Aristotle, and a philosopher of great

* BUCKINGHAM'S *Travels in Mesopotamia*, Vol. I, p. 121.

† Josephus, I, vi, 4.














repute, the Chaldeans were first called *Cephenes* from *Cepheus*, and afterwards *Chaldæans* from *Chaldæus*, an Assyrian king, fourteenth in succession from Ninus. This Chaldæus built Babylon near the Euphrates, and placed the Chaldaens in it.* This confirms in a remarkable manner the passage in Isaiah, which has given rise to the question as to the origin of the Chaldaens:—"Behold the land of the Chaldeans; this people was not till the Assyrian founded it for them that dwelt in the wilderness: they set up the towers thereof, they raised up the palaces thereof."†

The use of the word *Chaldean*, like that of *Assyrian*, was very vague. It appears to have been applied sometimes to the entire country bordering on the Tigris and Euphrates south of the mountainous regions of Asia Minor and Armenia, to only a part of it, to a race, and ultimately to a class of the priesthood. There is a remarkable passage in *Judith* (chap. v, 6, 7), in which the Jews are spoken of as descendants of the Chaldeans, a belief which is prevalent amongst all the Hebrews in Biblical lands at the present day.

Now, I must say a few words concerning the expression of *Ur*, which is said to have been found amongst the arrow-headed inscriptions in the Mound of Moggayir in Southern Babylonia. As I said before, it is not my business to enter into a minute detail about the etymology of the cuneiform inscriptions, inasmuch as I do not claim to be an Assyrian scholar, but I wish to try and give a commonsense view of the reading of Semitic languages. In the first place the word *Ur* which is said to have been found in the cuneiform inscriptions is not written with regular letters of the alphabet; and if it were, it does not prove that that was *Ur* of the Chaldees mentioned in the 11th chapter of Genesis, as the very fact of its being called *Ur* of the Chaldees shows that there were other *Urs* in Biblical lands in those days, as the *Or* of Salem (or Jerusalem).

* STEPHANUS, *Dict. Hist. Geog.*

Moreover, the word **Ur** is not pronounced thus in the original Semitic languages, and even if it were, how is it to be assumed that that was really pronounced as **Ur**, when we know that **Or** of **Salem** in **Aramaic** is spelt and pronounced differently, as **𐤀𐤓** **Yeroo** in **Hebrew**. It is very difficult for any person not quite conversant even with modern Semitic languages to understand not only the pronunciation but the real meaning of certain words, unless he has lived in the country since childhood and become acquainted with the idioms and phraseology understood by the natives. Very often a traveller finds that what he learnt in one country where Arabic is spoken is not to be comprehended in another. I think one example will suffice, and that is the word **من** *min* (which means *from*), consisting of two letters, **م** meem **M**, and **ن** noon **N**. When it is pronounced differently it is turned into who? defective, being benevolent, conferring a benefit, manna, and a measure of two pounds. The most wonderful of all the changes that take place in an Arabic word is **عجوز** *Ajooz*, which means an old woman. There are no less than one hundred meanings to that word when it is pronounced according to its application and context. The oddest of all the combinations in the list of words under the head of *Ajooz* are, a young woman of delicate constitution; an old man; a king; a kettle; a pot; butter; wine; a lion; a horse; a bull; a cow; a dog; and a she-camel! If these variable meanings of four Arabic letters constituting an old woman are not enough to puzzle even an Assyrian scholar, I do not know what would be.

"The bilingual texts give the name of Mugeyyer thus:             

"You will notice that after the D.S. ('determinative suffix, showing that what precedes is the name of a place), there is the character *ma* (or *wa*), indicating that the full form of the word in Akkadian was *Urima*, or *Uriwa*. There is no trace of this extra

syllable in the Assyrian form, but it certainly ought to be in the Hebrew, if Mugeyyer be Ur of the Chaldees. In my opinion, the extra letter or syllable at the end would have been represented by ו, or וּ (אורו, or אורוא). That the Assyrian has *u* (Uru) and not *o* (Oru) is no argument against the identification, as the same vowel had to do duty for both *u* and *o* in that language. Except the likeness of the name, I do not know why scholars have identified Ur-Kasdim with Uru (Mugeyyer). They regard the latter as being in the land of the Chaldees."

Through the blundering of the Greeks there has been no end of confusion in like manner as regards the word אַרַם Aram in Hebrew, which was corrupted into Syria, and אַרַמִּי Aramee into Syriac; and so it happened in regard to the ancient name of *Assyrians*, as Herodotus mentions in his *Polymnia* (Book VII. chap. 63), that the Greeks called them *Syrians*. Professor George Rawlinson, the present Canon of Canterbury, however, has tried to contradict in his learned work,* entitled "Rawlinson's Herodotus," the father of history, by alleging that "Syrian" is nothing but a variant of Tyrian," and that Syrian and Assyrian are two entirely different words. That the Greeks when they first became acquainted with the country between Asia Minor and Egypt, found the people of Tyre (Tzur) predominant there, and from them called the country in which they dwelt Syria (for Tsyria, which was beyond their powers of articulation). Afterwards, when they heard of the Assyrians, they supposed the name to be the same, though it had really a very different sound and origin. Then he goes on to say: "The difference between the two words will be seen most plainly by reference to the original languages. The root of 'Syrian' is in Hebrew צור (Tzur), the root of 'Assyrian' is אַשּׁוּר (Asshur). A still greater distinction is found in the Assyrian inscriptions, where Assyria is called Assur, but the Tyrians are styled Tsur-ra-ya, the characters used being entirely different. With respect to original meaning, Tzur seems to be rightly explained, as so called from the rock (צור) on which the town was built; Asshur is perhaps to be connected with אִשּׁר 'happiness,' at any rate it can have no connection with tzur."

It is difficult to understand how Professor Rawlinson manages to prove his argument by asserting that the word Syrian was a

* Vol. IV, p. 52. (Note.)

corruption of the Greek Tyrian, or the Hebrew Tzur! In the Semitic languages Tyre is rendered צור Ssoor with the hard *s*, or ssadee), and in the Greek and other European languages it has been called Tyre, or Tyrus. In the Septuagint version of the Old Testament there is a great distinction between the words Tyre and Syrian. The former is written *Τυρος*, Tyrian, or *Τυρίος*, but the latter is mentioned as *Συρίαν*, Syrian, which is a corrupt rendering of Aram. Moreover there is no such word as Syria in Hebrew or Aramaic, but the proper word is אַרַם Aram. This proves that when the Old Testament was translated into Greek, the term Tyre was understood to have no connexion with the foreign appellation Syria, they being two distinct nomenclatures. Even the late Sir Henry Rawlinson, the brother of the Professor, considered that the word Syria was a corruption of Assyria, as it will be seen from his remark upon his brother's note in "Herodotus," Book I, chap. 6, in which he says, "[the only true word is Assyria, from Asshur. Syria is a Greek corruption of the genuine term.—H. C. R.]."

Even in the present day people are puzzling their heads whether the Chaldeans of Assyria and Mesopotamia, of which nationality I am, are entitled to that ancient name, as if those people had no origin, but had fallen from the sky! Indeed, the members of the Archbishop's Mission to the Assyrian Christians have taken the liberty of giving them a new name by calling them "East Syrians," an appellation which is quite foreign to them, as they never had any connexion with Syria, and their country lies on the eastern side of the Tigris, known as Assyria, and not to the west of the Euphrates! Being ignorant of the habits and customs, and historical changes in Biblical lands, they have drawn their conclusions from the word "Soorayé," by which, as they allège, the Nestorians, who inhabit the highlands of Assyria, call themselves. This is a mere religious term which means *Christian*, like the sect of the *Nazarenes*.^{*} "Soorayé" is a corruption of the word *athoorayé* (Assyrian), the same as Othman is corrupted by the Turks into Osman, and turned into English as *Ottoman*. The *th* as in three is turned into *s*, as it is now pronounced by different Biblical nationalities, such as the Yezedees, Coords, and Persians.

The Chaldeans, both as a nation and a sect, have been mentioned by different writers from time to time, namely—Herodotus,

* Acts xxiv, 5.

Xenophon, Josephus, Bar Hebraeus, Assemani, and the modern geographers; and the Arab historians, in particular, allude to Assyria as *Athoor*, on the eastern side of the Tigris, where Nineveh is situated. The Chaldeans of the present day, therefore, are considered also Assyrians from the country they inhabit; and with regard to their language they have always retained the Aramaic dialect, which is called in the Targum, Daniel, and Ezra, *Chaldee*, but is known in Europe as Syriac. The word Syriac, or *Siryancee*, is applied by them to the characters used by the so-called Syrians or Jacobites. It is true there is very little difference between the Chaldean and the Syriac, but the dissemblance is marked in the formation of the letters, and the pronunciation of a number of words like Yegar-sahadutha* (heap of witness), Maran-atha† (our Lord's coming), Abba‡ (father), Talitha§ (damsel), Maria (Lord), Allaha (God), which the Syrians pronounce Yegor Sohodotho, Morenotho, Obbo, Tolitho, Morio, and Olloho.

Formerly the Syrians of Mesopotamia, who were of the same descent as the Chaldeans, spoke their language and wrote like them; but in the thirteenth century Bar-Hebraeus, a promoter of the Jacobites, wishing to make a thorough distinction between the writing of the Monophysites and that of the so-called Nestorians, on account of the bitter doctrinal antagonism which existed between those two sects, changed the characters and vowel points. The Chaldean P and A were changed into F and O respectively; and if we refer to Holy Writ, whether Hebrew or Greek, including the Septuagint, it will be found that the present Chaldeans keep to the old pronunciation.

There is no doubt that the Nestorians of the highland and the lowland of Assyria were of the same origin as the Chaldeans of Mossul; Baghdad, and Diarbekir; but socially speaking they do not stand on the same footing, because, while the former, with few exceptions, are rural and of the peasant class, the latter are cultured and stand in a higher status of society.

There can be no better proof of a people's nationality than the language, homestead, and history; and certainly no nation in the world has a better claim to Assyrian and Chaldean descent than the Chaldeans of Assyria and Mesopotamia. Their language has always been Chaldee, though Arabic is now the common language

* Genesis xxi, 47.

† 1 Cor. xvi, 22.

‡ Mark xiv, 36.

§ Mark v, 41.

of the country, which was adopted in the time of the Arab conquest. Their country was known formerly as Assyria, and history has always pointed to that country as being the fatherland of the Chaldeans and Assyrians. Xenophon mentions in his *Cyclopædia* that when he passed through the mountainous regions of Assyria and Media he met with three nationalities, namely,—the Carduchi (Coords), Armenians, and Chaldeans; and at the present time these three distinct peoples are found in the same country. No one doubts that the two former are remnants of those mentioned by Xenophon, yet the third, who are now styled vulgarly, in a religious sense, "Nestorians," must have no nationality of their own, because, forsooth, some foreign travellers took it into their heads to attach to them a strange term as Nestorians, which is merely a nickname like Lutheran or Wesleyan. In the greater part of Assyria Chaldee is spoken; but in Mesopotamia the common language is Arabic; and each of the different Christian communities retains its mother tongue in its church services and ecclesiastical correspondence. So also in Syria, the Holy Land, and Egypt, like the Greeks, Armenians and Copts; but all official communications are carried on in Turkish. It is very remarkable that the present Chaldeans are called both Chaldeans and Assyrians, and their ancient national language is Aramean or Chaldee, derived, as that of the Hebrews, from Aram, one of the sons of Shem. There is no doubt their origin came from Arpachshad, Asshur, and Aram, mentioned in the 22nd verse of the tenth chapter of Genesis. When and how the affinity and amalgamation came into existence in ancient time must be left to conjecture, but there is one thing certain, that in accordance with Semitic custom, when people intermarried with a different nationality, they adopted the name on the mother side; and it may be that the Arpachshadites at one time or other intermarried with the Arameans, from whom they obtained their present language.

The habits, customs, and dress in biblical lands have undergone a great change, except amongst the Arabs, during the last fifty years. The higher class of Christians have adopted the European costume, and the French and English languages are being cultivated, especially the former, on account of the number of schools opened by the Vatican Missions. Formerly in most places, particularly in Syria, degrading restrictions were imposed upon the Jews and Christians in their attire; and at one time, in a large number of cities, no Christian or Jew was allowed to ride a horse, and if they

rode donkeys, as their lot, they were compelled to dismount when they passed a Moslem of rank or the precincts of a religious place. The ladies, too, have changed, in a great measure, their primitive costumes, and taken to European apparel. They even go so far as to wear gloves, laced boots, and complete their attire by carrying sunshades! The nomad Arabs and Coords, on the contrary, keep to their old costumes, which I think have not seen much change from primitive time. The food of the Coords and Arabs, and the lower classes of the inhabitants of biblical lands, has not changed much, as the "savoury meat" which Isaac desired Esau, his son, to prepare for him, is still a standing dish amongst the primitive inhabitants of the land.

The Arabs, especially the women, still go about without wearing drawers, as the custom used to be amongst the ancients like Noah* and the Israelites.† Amongst both Christians, Hebrews, and Moslems, it is a sin to enter any place of worship with their shoes on, as they adhere to God's command to Moses at the burning bush,‡ though the former and the Jews are now following the European habit of performing their religious rites with their dirty shoes and boots on. It is a notable fact that up to the present day all Moslems, whether Turks, Arabs, Persians, or Indians, conform to the same divine command by taking their boots and shoes off when they perform their worship, though they are quite ignorant of the origin of the ceremony.

The ancient custom of washing the stranger's feet is not practised now in biblical lands, but it is in vogue in Abyssinia. Generally speaking those who perform this duty are females, but I was one of those few who preferred to do the necessary ablution for myself.

The ancient biblical habits still exist in Mesopotamia, amongst both Christians and Moslems, of rending their garment§ at a calamity, or grief or anger; smiting upon the breast|| at prayer or supplication; bowing their heads to the ground in the act of worship¶ or homage**; throwing dust on their heads, and covering

* Genesis, ix, 21.

† Exodus xx, 26.

‡ Exodus, iii, 5.

§ 2 Sam. xiii, 19.

|| Luke, xviii, 13.

¶ Genesis, xvii, 3.

** Ruth, ii, 10. This kind of homage can also be noticed on the black obelisk found by Sir Henry Layard at Nimroud, where the ambassador of King Ahab is seen falling on his face before Shalmaneser. It is also remarkable that all Mohammedan worshippers, when praying, have to go down on their knees and touch the ground with their foreheads.

it with their hands in great affliction* and such like misfortune.

It was prophesied by Nahum (ii, 7) respecting the destruction of Ninevah thus: "And Huzzab shall be led away captive, she shall be brought up, and her maids shall lead her as with the voice of doves, tabering upon their breasts." This kind of lamentation is most scrupulously practised in the Irack (Babylonia) by the Sheea sect of the Moslems, when the anniversary of the murder of their patron saint Hosain is commemorated. I have seen blood gushing out from the wounds caused by the severe tabering on the breasts of young men when they were bewailing the historical tragedy.

The most remarkable observance which still exists amongst the Arabs is the "covenant of salt," as it prevailed with biblical nationalities in primitive time. We find it was a divine ordinance amongst the Israelites to celebrate their heave offerings with salt.† In writing to Artaxerxes, King of Persia, of their fidelity to him, the governors beyond the Euphrates tell him thus: "Because we eat the salt of the palace it was not meet for us to see the king's dishonour, therefore have we sent and certified the king."‡

I must end by relating a quaint story which happened to a friend at Aden, the Arabian British settlement, when I was acting as first assistant political resident there. He was looked upon with great veneration by all Arabs of Arabia Felix, not only on account of his sainted ancestors, but for his piety and influence in the country, which reminded me of the trick played upon Jacob by Laban. His name was Seyyid Alowi Alaidroos, the chiefest amongst the Aden Arabs, and he having heard that the Sultan of Lahaj had two handsome sisters, contracted to marry the youngest, who was reported to him to be the best looking of the two. Of course, according to the custom of the notable Arab families of that country he was not privileged to see his betrothed, but trusted to the praises and commendations of his female friends who, I have no doubt, related to him everything about her, even to her graceful walk and sweet sounding voice. Her brother consented to the marriage, and when the happy day came and the wedlock ceremony was performed, he found that instead of the damsel he chose, the elder one was given to him. It can well be imagined in what a state my friend

* 2 Samuel xiii, 19.

† Lev. ii, 13, and Numbers, xviii, 19.

‡ Ezra, iv, 14.

got into when he found the unexpected change. When he remonstrated with his brother-in-law for the trick he had played him, he was told that it was contrary to Arab rule to marry the younger before the elder, but he promised him, after he would fulfil her month, to let him have her sister, which he did. I am glad to say that my friend was quite satisfied and lived a happy life with the two sisters afterwards, and the two damsels were in like manner elated at having a distinguished descendant of the prophet Mohammed as their lord and master.

There also occurred another biblical incident in my time in Abyssinia, illustrating king Saul's capricious behaviour with regard to the re-marriage of his daughter Michal, the wife of David, when the latter had to flee from the fury of the former (1 Sam. xxv, 44). When Menelik, the present Emperor of Abyssina, was a semi-captive with King Theodore, the latter gave him his daughter in marriage; but, on finding that his father-in-law was getting more cruel every day, and his best friends were not safe from his inhuman deeds, he deemed it prudent to decamp. When Theodore learnt of his son-in-law's escape, he at once re-married his daughter to another favourite courtier.

